DR. *STINTON'S*

SERMON

PREACHED BEFORE

THE GOVERNORS OF THE

LINCOLN-HOSPITAL.

LINCOLN. November 9. 1769.

ORDERED,

THAT the Thanks of this Society be given to the Reverend Dr. STINTON, for his Sermon preached before us this Day; and that he be desired to deliver a Copy of the same in order to it's being Printed.

JOHN THOROLD, Chairman.

682. e 25
3

A

SERMON

PREACHED IN THE

Cathedral Church of *LINCOLN*,

BEFORE

The Governors of the COUNTY-HOSPITAL,

On it's being opened for the Reception of Patients,

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER IX, 1769.

By *GEORGE STINTON*, D. D.

Chancellor of the Church of LINCOLN, and Chaplain to the Lord Archbiſhop of CANTERBURY.

LINCOLN;

Printed and Sold by W. WOOD and SON:

And Sold by Meſs. J. and F. RIVINGTON, in St Paul's Church-yard; Mr. CROWDER, in Pater-noſter-Row; Mr. WHITE, in Fleet-ſtreet London: Mr FLETCHER, at Oxford; Mr. MERRIL, at Cambridge; and Mr. THORN, at Exeter.

M.DCC.LXIX.

1 SAM. CHAP. 2. VERSE 7.

THE LORD MAKETH POOR AND MAKETH RICH: HE BRINGETH LOW, AND LIFTETH UP.

OF all the Complaints which the World abounds with, on Account of the unequal Diſtribution of temporal Advantages, ſcarce any are more frequent or more heavy, than thoſe which are occaſioned by the Diſtinction of Mankind into Rich and Poor. In other Caſes, we can diſcover a Variety of Circumſtances to hinder the riſing of Diſcontent in our Boſoms; or at leaſt to ſtop it's Progreſs, and diminiſh it's Force. For Inſtance, the Superiority of others to ourſelves may be queſtioned, and doubted, and denied, when it would give us Pain to acknowledge it: or, if it be too apparent for this Artifice to ſuc-

ceed, we can eaſily bring ourſelves to deſpiſe it, as a Superiority of ſome inconſiderable Kind, and ſuch as we ourſelves could ſoon attain, if we thought it worth the Purſuit: or perhaps, the Occaſions which force us to make mortifying Compariſons between ourſelves and others, may give us ſome Reſpite, and not return with ſuch a provoking Frequency as to exhauſt our Patience. But it ſeldom happens that any of theſe lenient Arts are employed with Succeſs in reconciling us to the Want of Riches. An Inferiority in this Reſpect cannot often be concealed from others, and never from ourſelves. The Uneaſineſs it gives is but aukwardly hidden under an Affectation of Contempt; for to be Rich is what a great part of Mankind avowedly, and a greater ſtill ſecretly, wiſh to be. We are conſcious that it does not depend upon ourſelves to be ſo, with whatever Ardour we attempt it; and the painful Senſe we have of our Condition is perpetually kept awake by that oſtentatious Diſplay of Affluence, which the Generality of thoſe who poſſeſs it conſider as one of it's moſt valuable Privileges. What increaſes the Hardſhip is, that this dreaded Evil, Poverty, is the Lot not merely of a few ſcattered Individuals, but of the Majority of the human Race: ſo that, from this Source only, excluſive of all the other Calamities of Life, inevitable Miſery ſhould ſeem to be entailed upon us by Providence, at the ſame Time that the ſtrongeſt Propenſity in our Nature is the Deſire of Happineſs.

Such

Such is the common Language, ſuch at leaſt is the too common Opinion, not only of thoſe who feel the Inconveniences of real Penury, but of thoſe alſo who groan under the Burden of imaginary Wants, and permit their Deſires to wander beyond the Sufficiency they poſſeſs. Their Principles ſeem to be, that this Life is the great Scene of human Enjoyment, and that this Enjoyment conſiſts in Riches, either as the Thing itſelf, or the Means to obtain it: and hence it follows of Courſe, that Poverty is but another Name for Miſery, and Wealth for Happineſs.

And yet, this unequal Diſtribution of Poſſeſſions, ariſes immediately from the Nature of Man, and his Situation in this World:

It is abſolutely requiſite for the very Exiſtence of human Society:

It is the expreſs Appointment of God himſelf, who, in the Words of the Text, *maketh poor and maketh rich, who bringeth low and liſteth up:*

It implies no Inattention in Providence to the equitable Adminiſtration of human Affairs, no Neglect of the real Intereſts of Men:

And laſtly, the Inconveniences accidentally reſulting from it, have an adequate Remedy provided for

them, and are calculated to produce a conſiderable Overballance of Good.

A diſtinct Conſideration of theſe Topics will ſuggeſt many Reflections ſuited to the general Deſign of charitable Inſtitutions: and lead the Way to ſome Obſervations particularly reſpecting That whoſe Intereſts we are now aſſembled to promote.

Firſt then, the preſent unequal Diſtribution of Property ariſes immediately from the Nature of Man, and his Situation in this World. In the earlieſt Ages, the Earth lay open to all it's Inhabitants; and each, it may be ſuppoſed, poſſeſſed himſelf of ſuch a Portion of it, as was ſufficient to ſupply himſelf and thoſe whom Nature had put under his Care, with the Accommodations of Life. To procure the moſt valuable of theſe, the Improvements of Labour are neceſſary: to excite Men to make theſe Improvements by painful Efforts, a permanent Enjoyment for themſelves, and a Right of tranſmitting them to thoſe whom they conſider as themſelves, would ſoon be diſcerned to be the common Intereſt of all. By the conſtant Increaſe of the Species, Property, thus acquired, would gradually be extended every where; and the original Method of getting it, by prior Occupancy, muſt ceaſe of Courſe. In the mean Time, another Title would quickly riſe up in it's Place. The ſuperior Strength, and Induſtry, and Dexterity of ſome

muſt

muſt furniſh them with more than they needed; while others, through Sickneſs, Debility, or Indolence, would ſoon be reduced to Want. The latter, in order to ſupply their Neceſſities, muſt now give up to the former whatever theſe ſhall conſider as an Equivalent for the Superfluities they poſſeſs. To be exempted from the Toils of manual Labour, to be ſupplied with the more elegant Accommodations of Life, to command the Reſpect and Attention of others, are Things likely to be firſt aimed at; and the direct Way to obtain them is to demand that Property be transferred, and perſonal Service paid, by thoſe who muſt be content to purchaſe Aſſiſtance upon almoſt any Conditions. Mankind could not have exiſted long, before theſe Cauſes would begin to operate; and their immediate Effects were not merely a temporary and perſonal, but an hereditary and permanent Inequality among Men. The Diſtinction between rich and poor, being thus introduced, will of Courſe ſubſiſt for ever; at leaſt, it will remain in general, though Individuals will be perpetually paſſing from one of theſe Claſſes to the other. Fraud and Violence are too often employed for this Purpoſe; but Wealth may alſo be honeſtly acquired by Frugality and Diligence; and it may be innocently loſt, by a Variety of unavoidable Accidents. It can ſcarce be expected that the rich will not exult in their Affluence, and the poor be uneaſy under their Penury; but, however Particulars may be affected by this Difference of Circumſtances, it is, Secondly,

Secondly, a Thing advantageous, nay neceſſary, for the whole. For, without Society, even thoſe who are moſt ready to complain of their Station in it, would enjoy but a very inconſiderable Part of their preſent Conveniences, and even not that with Security and Quiet. Now Society, in it's very Nature, implies Government; Government cannot ſubſiſt without Subordination; and Subordination is only another Word for a Difference of Conditions. The many have nothing left them but to obey; their Education and their Talents have given them no other Choice; they muſt execute the lawful Commands of their Superiors, and undergo the Drudgeries of Life. Their Portion is bodily Labour, and their Reward is bodily Support. We may amuſe ourſelves, as we pleaſe, with imaginary Plans of a better Conſtitution of Things; but this is the real Courſe of human Affairs; and it is bound upon us by invincible Neceſſity. But who would condeſcend to theſe humbler Stations, if all could ſubſiſt in the higher? Who would *till the Ground in the ſweat of his Face*, if, without it, *he could eat Bread?* The preſent State of Things therefore is better than all ideal Schemes of univerſal Affluence and Plenty, ſince it is the Foundation of that Order, Security, and Peace which reſult from the Eſtabliſhment of Society, in Oppoſition to the wild, defenceleſs Condition of ſavage, uncivilized Nature.

But

But it is not on mere human Authority that this Diſtinction was eſtabliſhed: it is alſo, thirdly, the Appointment of God himſelf. That Men ſhould aſſociate with each other for their mutual Defence and Comfort, muſt evidently be the Deſign of Providence, or human Happineſs is not at all an Object to the Governor of the World. The whole Bent of our Nature, and our Nature is not of our own forming, impels us irreſiſtibly towards a ſocial State: the natural Advantages reſulting from it are a further Indication of what we are deſigned for: and our Obligations to many Virtues, which both natural and revealed Religion inculcate, and which are impracticable by ſolitary, unconnected Beings, are an expreſs Declaration of the Will of God. But whenever he commands an End, he does, in Effect, command the Means by which alone that End can be obtained; and we have ſeen that Society, without a Difference of Stations and Inequality of Poſſeſſions, is a chimerical and viſionary Thing. To theſe Arguments from Fact, may be added the Authority of Scripture. It not only abounds with Paſſages which preſuppoſe this Diſtinction to be already made; which mention it without Cenſure as unavoidable in the Nature of Things; which point out the Temptations and inculcate the Duties reſpectively ariſing from it; but with ſuch alſo as expreſsly attribute it's Origin to God himſelf. *The Rich and the Poor meet together: the Lord is the Maker of them all. Both Riches and Poverty come of him:*

and

and in his Hand it is to make great, and to give Strength unto all. And in the Words of the Text; *The Lord maketh poor and maketh rich: he bringeth low and lifteth up.*

But, fourthly, this Difference of Conditions, whatever Triumph it may occaſion to the Rich, whatever Murmurs it may excite in the Poor, implies no Inattention in Providence to the equitable Adminiſtration of human Affairs, no Neglect of the real Intereſts of Men. If indeed we had been created to paſs the few Years of our ſojourning here in Indolence, Luxury, and Pleaſure, we ſhould have ſome Cauſe to complain of this Diſpenſation. For Wealth is a neceſſary Inſtrument for theſe Purpoſes, and it certainly falls to the Lot of but a ſmall Part of Mankind. But there are thouſands of Indications that this World was not intended for a Place of uninterrupted Enjoyment. Pain, and Sorrow, and the Variety of unavoidable Misfortunes we meet with, are Things abſolutely inconſiſtent with ſuch a Suppoſition. Still there is an End, to which theſe and all other untoward Appearances may be reconciled. Admit only what Religion teaches, and what common Senſe confirms, that we are now in a State of Probation for another World, and all Difficulties vaniſh. It is hard to conceive a Situation better adapted for the Trial, the Exerciſe, and the Improvement of Virtue; or worſe, for a conſtant Scene of Pleaſure. The Gratifications,

ons, which Providence has ſet before us, are too mean to be reſted in as an End, though ſufficient to ſweeten our Journey through Life; and theſe, at leaſt all that Virtue can accept, or Prudence juſtify, are diſtributed with a moſt impartial Hand. Only let it not be taken for granted, that affluent Circumſtances, high Titles, or conſpicuous Stations do of Courſe make their Poſſeſſors happy. The Glitter and Parade that attend them, are obvious indeed to every Eye, and excite the Envy of ſuperficial Obſervers; but theſe outward Trappings have no Connection with the Mind, which is demonſtrably the Seat of all true Joy, and they frequently conceal beneath them an aching Heart. Whereas the ſilent heart-felt Pleaſures, that Virtue beſtows, though they eſcape the Obſervation of the Public, and are therefore neglected in eſtimating the comparative Value of different Stations, are the only real Treaſures of a rational Being. They have ſupported the Minds of many under Poverty, Diſgrace, and Tortures: while others, with all the Advantages that Fortune could beſtow, have fled to voluntary Death as a Refuge from mental Miſery. I am not ſpeaking of the Melancholy Effects of Frenzy, but of that ſecret Diſſatisfaction with themſelves, that Diſreliſh of all Wordly Comfort, and that Wearineſs of Life itſelf, which frequently attends upon worthleſs Characters, and prompts them to the laſt dreadful Act of Deſpair. At the ſame Time,

Time, it muſt be confeſſed, that theſe inward Torments may be contrived to be felt, together with all the Inconveniences of outward Poverty. The Peaſant may be as vicious in himſelf, though not ſo extenſively miſchievous to the Community, as one in the higheſt Station; and the ſame Conſciouſneſs of Ill-deſert muſt awaken the ſame Terrors in both, with the ſame Apprehenſions of Puniſhment from God and Man.

Upon the whole, the Truth is, that the natural Bleſſings of Health, Strength, Eaſe and long Life are beſtowed indiſcriminately upon all: the natural Afflictions of Pain, Sickneſs, domeſtic and public Calamities, fall equally upon every Station: the moral Qualifications of Piety, Virtue, Benevolence, Meekneſs and Contentment, with all that inward Peace, and outward Reſpect, and Hope of Immortality that accompany them, are within the Reach of whoever will labour to attain them: and as for Vice, with it's whole Train of Miſeries both here and hereafter, it is entailed upon no Man as his Lot, and can be incurred only by his Choice.

Thus far the gracious Author of our Being appears to have beſtowed impartially upon his Creatures, not indeed whatever their Pride and Selfiſhneſs may demand, but *all Things that pertain to Life and Godlineſs.* There is however one Caſe, which carries with it, at firſt Sight, a greater Shew of Inequality.

lity. Of the various Calamities of Life, there are many that admit of Redreſs by the Aſſiſtance of our Fellow-Creatures; but the Means of obtaining this Aſſiſtance are out of the Reach of the Poor, while Affluence has them at Command.

Deplorable indeed would be the Condition of a great Part of Mankind, if we had nothing to prompt us to Beneficence, beſides the Call of our own immediate Intereſt: but, where this is leſs urgent and obvious, our wiſe and good Maker has ſupplied us with other Motives. He has implanted in our Breaſts a tender and compaſſionate Senſe of the Miſeries of our Brethren: our Reaſon approves the Exerciſe of this Affection in endeavouring to relieve their Wants: the Peace of our own Minds, and the Eſteem of Mankind can by no Conduct be ſo certainly obtained: our own frequent Experience of Suffering, and the apparent Viciſſitude of worldly Affairs, render Hardneſs of Heart inexcuſable: and the Religion of Chriſt has made Works of Charity and Mercy a Condition of our obtaining Mercy at the great Day of Account. Were theſe Motives to operate as they ought, the World would ſoon be a different Place from what it is. Every human Calamity would receive all the Succour that it's Nature admits of: the delightful Affections of Pity and Gratitude would be exerciſed by all: the Rich and the Poor would be connected by the amiable Tie of doing and receiving Good: and all Mankind be

united in the Bonds of mutual Benevolence. The accidental Inconveniences of Poverty would be provided with an adequate Remedy: the common Temptations of Wealth would be deprived of all their Force, and it's Abuſes entirely vaniſh: many Virtues which a State of Equality among Men gives no Opportunities of practiſing, would be, as it were, created; and thus, fifthly, the unequal Diſtribution of Property, which in all Ages of the World has been complained of as one of the greateſt Evils in it, would produce a conſiderable Overballance of Good.

It is undoubtedly much to be lamented, that the Principles of our common Nature and the Precepts of our common Religion do not produce theſe Effects in their full Extent. But their Influence is unhappily confined, in ſome by Avarice, in others by a ſtudied Inſenſibility of Temper, and in more, by miſtaken Notions of Intereſt. And yet, notwithſtanding theſe Obſtacles, a Neglect of the Duties of Beneficence is by no Means the prevailing Fault among the many by which this Age is diſtinguiſhed. The ſecret Charities of thoſe who induſtriouſly conceal them from the public Eye, and *let not their left Hand know what their right Hand doth*, are unqueſtionably many and great. They cannot indeed be eſtimated by Men; but they are ſeen and approved of God. They deſcend, like the Dew of Heaven, in ſilent refreſhing Showers; and they

comfort

comfort many a drooping Heart which would otherwiſe pine away in ſolitary Grief, and conſume in unnoticed Miſery. In Spite of all Endeavours to hide them, they ſometimes force their Way into open Day-light: and it is happy for the World that they do ſo: for there is a Charm in them which muſt win upon every one who has not entirely caſt off the Feelings of Humanity, to *go and do likewiſe*; and they animate thoſe, who are already engaged in this godlike Employment, to go on with redoubled Induſtry and Ardour.

But many a Scene of Affliction, both in populous Towns, where the Poor are too often Strangers to the rich among whom they live, and in Country Places, inhabited only by Perſons as poor as themſelves, muſt needs eſcape the Obſervation of private Beneficence; and many are of ſuch a Nature, as to exceed it's Power of Relief. There was Occaſion therefore for a farther Supply; and it has been made in various Manners. A Proviſion eſtabliſhed for the Poor by Law, and levied as a public Tax, is a Thing peculiar to this Kingdom, and unknown to the whole World beſides. But there is a Fund of Benevolence in *Engliſh* Boſoms, which this conſtrained Bounty cannot exhauſt; and our voluntary Contributions are alſo ſuch as no Nation upon Earth has yet equalled, and probably none will ever exceed. Well diſpoſed Perſons, of different Ranks, many of the higheſt and moſt diſtinguiſhed,

tinguiſhed, have formed themſelves into Societies, each applying itſelf to a diſtinct Branch of Charity, and promoting it more effectually by united, than could have been done by ſingle, Endeavours. To theſe we owe that Variety of Receptacles for the Diſtreſſed, which are at once an Ornament and an Honour to our Country, and a Refuge to wretched Humanity under the various Ills to which it is expoſed in this World.

It might perhaps have been reaſonably expected, that this opulent and extenſive County would have been earlier to imitate the Example of the Metropolis and ſeveral of the leſs conſiderable Diviſions of the Kingdom, in making the ſame Proviſion for it's diſeaſed Poor that they have done: but it may certainly be expected now, that ſo ſalutary, ſo beneficent, ſo unexceptionable a Deſign, being once ſet on Foot, will meet with all the Encouragement that it deſerves. For, beſides the general Motives to Benevolence which affect equally the whole human Race, there are ſome peculiar to our Situation. The Poor among us are leſs collected into conſiderable Towns and Villages, they inhabit the Country in a more diſperſed and ſcattered State, than is common in the other Parts of the Iſland. They are therefore leſs within the Reach of Medical Aſſiſtance in their Diſorders and Caſualties: they muſt procure it from a conſiderable Diſtance with greater Difficulty and Expence: they muſt

muſt enjoy it's Advantages leſs regularly and therefore leſs effectually; or be compelled to take up with ſuch as they can find near them; which, Want of Education and Experience in the Practitioners may probably render little better than none at all.

It is to preſerve many uſeful Lives from being thus inhumanly ſacrificed, and many more from languiſhing away in unrelieved Poverty and Pain, that your Aſſiſtance is now requeſted. Your Contributions will aſſuredly be diſpoſed of with the moſt diſintereſted Fidelity and Prudence; the Promotion of all private Intereſts will be avoided with peculiar Care; and the Plan be rendered as extenſively uſeful as poſſible. The preſent Aſſembly is conſiderable enough in Number, Rank, and Affluence, to be able to do much towards making it a general Bleſſing to the County. The Inconveniences of giving largely will be felt ſeverely by none, and not at all by moſt; and you will have the exalted Satisfaction of reflecting that you have done your Part towards alleviating, as far as human Succour can alleviate, the Sufferings of your Fellow-Creatures. The Superfluities which ſome are indulged with were expreſsly given them for this Purpoſe. The Rich are not to conſider themſelves as the Proprietors, but the Stewards and Diſpenſers, of their Wealth. They are ſtrictly accountable for the Uſe of it to him who

who gave it them; and they are guilty of Diſhoneſty, as well as Inhumanity, if they do not apply it to relieve the Neceſſities of the Poor.

It is, I know, but too common for the upper Ranks in Life to overlook this Claim which the lower have to their Regard: but, notwithſtanding the accidental Diſtinctions which now take Place among us, we meet upon much evener Terms than many are willing to remember. *The Lord is the Maker of us all.* We have all the ſame Father in Adam, the ſame Redeemer in Chriſt, the ſame Creator in God Almighty. We are all Partakers of one common Nature: we muſt deſcend to the Grave alike: We muſt be ſummoned before the ſame impartial Judge. And the Rules of his Tribunal are, that *He ſhall have Judgement without Mercy, who hath ſhewed no Mercy:* but *Charity ſhall cover a Multitude of Sins.*